

LESSON I

I. Importance of the Hebrew Language

The Hebrew language is important:

- A. Because it is the language in which most of the Old Testament was written.

The parts of the Old Testament which were not written in Hebrew are Genesis 31:47; Jeremiah 10:11; Daniel 2:4b-7:28; and Ezra 4:8-6:18 and 7:12-26. These parts were all written in Aramaic which is a cognate language, and there was a specific reason for using the Aramaic in each case.

- B. Because it helps to settle some doctrinal questions (e.g. Isaiah 7:14 cf. Genesis 24:16,43).
- C. Because it brings out shades of meaning which are not evident in various Old Testament translations (e.g. Psalm 32:1,2).
- D. Because it helps to clarify the meaning of some passages which are obscure in various Old Testament translations (e.g. Psalm 121:1,2).
- E. Because it enables us to check the accuracy of various Old Testament translations (e.g. Psalm 22:16).
- F. Because it gives a peculiar sense of authority to the preacher of the Old Testament Scriptures.

II. Development of the Hebrew Text

- A. The Hebrew Text originally consisted only of consonants.

The Hebrew Text had no vowels when it was first written.

- B. Vowel Letters were added to the Hebrew Text in the Intertestament Period.

1. Identification of the Vowel Letters

- a. Aleph (א) - this represented the long a sound.
- b. He (ה) - this represented the long e sound.
- c. Waw (ו) - this represented the long o and long u sounds.
- d. Yodh (י) - this represented the long i and long e sounds.